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ABSTRACT

The value of teaching Standard English as the language of school and mainstream middle class culture is undisputed, yet Black English, as a non-standard English dialect, has great potential as an instructional tool in the composition classroom. The use of the black dialect can help expand black students' intellectual potential by de-stigmatizing non-standard forms. In addition, white students will achieve the opportunity to understand the linguistic validity of an unfamiliar form. The evaluation of Black English and some white Southern dialects from West African dialects can be traced and attributed to a normal process of cultural transmission. The dispersement of verbal deprivation myths through the study of these linguistic origins can change negative attitudes held by educators and students concerning Black English. The "Black American English Code-Switching Technique," in addition to other methods described, can assist both black and white students in shifting from one linguistic system to another. (KS)

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BLACK AMERICAN ENGLISH: A SURVEY OF ITS ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENT AND ITS USE IN THE TEACHING OF COMPOSITION

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BLACK AMERICAN ENGLISH: A SURVEY OF ITS ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENT AND ITS USE IN THE TEACHING OF COMPOSITION

by Edward Anderson

Some educators have advocated the eradication of Black American English and other Non-standard American English dialects in the school training in order to bring about a change in students' communicating adequately in our American society and in helping them to move up the social ladder. These educators want emphasis put upon Standard American English in the classroom for enrichment and refinement.

Other educators emphasize the use of biloquialism or bi-dialectalism. These educators believe in the users' right to continue to use the dialect they use at home (which in many cases is Black American English and the other Non-standard American English dialects) after they (the students) have learned the school dialect (Standard American English). These educators believe that the students will be able to and should be trained to shift dialects when the need arises. They do not endorse the eradication approach to Non-standard dialects; hence, they stress giving the students an option to use Non-standard and/or Standard English.

A third group of educators believe that Non-standard American English should be offered to Standard American English users and that teachers should not try to change the language usage of Non-standard American English users. Their belief is expressed in the idea of understanding, respect, and tolerance for dialect differences.

Both approaches two and three have been used in the classroom quite successfully by me. At present I am continuing to put more stress upon the use of Non-standard American English dialects, especially upon the use of Black American English in the English composition classroom, and this paper is, therefore, presented to show how I have attempted to do this.

In America one often feels a definite need to speak and to write in Standard American English which is the acceptable form of communication in our complex society and which affects one's "success" in a given social, educational, cultural, and occupational environment. It is also the language system that is habitually used with some regional variation by most educated persons who speak English in the United States, and it aids in ease in communication in our complex society.

However, today (as has been the case in the past few hundred years) there are many Non-standard American English dialects that are spoken by various socio-economic classes and in various geographic areas and that are effectively used to a very great degree by many Americans. Black American English which is basically and often called "Negro dialect," "dialect," "street talk," "gutter talk," "ghetto talk," "Non-standard Negro English," "ghettoese," or "bad grammar" is one of these dialects that is especially non-acceptable in many American circles and in many American schools although it is regularly used by most of the people who are in America's largest minority group. At this point it is necessary to say that the term "Black American English" includes an entire linguistic system---a variety

of Standard American English distinguished from Standard American English by features of grammar, phonology, and vocabulary and used by a group of people who are socially set off from other speakers of Standard American English. However, Black American English is not exclusively spoken by all blacks in America and may be said to be used mainly among blacks with a low socio-economic status or the lower working class blacks who most often live in the ghetto or in the inner-city. These blacks are incorrectly said (by many educators) to be "disadvantaged," "dull," "cultually deprived," and unable to cope with the type of language used in the educational setting of the mainstream middle class society in schools thoughout the country. Yet, many high school and college educated black Americans (often products of the ghetto) use Black American English (in the appropriate environments), but are also able to smoothly shift to Standard American English when the need arises or in appropriate environments. The use of Black American English by black Americans is not an indicator of their intelligence. It is quite evident that the language used by many black Americans is not distinguishable from that language used by others of the same social class and region of the United States.

Just like the other American dialects, Black American English is a legitimate communication device that has logic, coherence, and grammaticalness as is repeatedly pointed out and supported by many outstanding linguists. William Labov recognizes the complex and sophisticated verbal and language abilities(i.e., verbality, verbosity, grammaticality, and logic) that Black American English users of a

Non-standard dialect possess.[1] Roger Abrahams further stresses this point when he says:

> In regard to the supposed substandard language of lower-class Negroes, school investigators are just beginning to recognize that Negro speech is a language system unto itself which differs from "standard English" in everything but vocabulary.[2]

Black culture and black lifestyles encourage and almost demand the use of fluency and verbal strategies that are not the same kinds of rhetorical strategies and dialect that the mainstream culture uses and thrives upon. Hence, black people's application of the present day black American dialect and black verbal strategies to their needs (mainly social and psychological) would appear to refute the so-called (black) deficit and deprivation theories that are stigmatizing blacks linguistically and rhetorically. Black Americans have extensively used Black American English along with the verbal strategies that they have produced. This use of the black dialect and the following black verbal strategies show how blacks are especially endowed with great verbal abilities: rapping, running it down, jiving, shucking, copping a plea, sounding and signifying. The black American dialect has also been very effective in the nationally acclaimed black (mainly oral) folk literary tradition (black folk tales, ballads, blues, spirituals, jokes, and secular songs) and in the mass media (especially the television and the movies).

Those--mainly teachers and other educators--who maintain that because some blacks do not speak Standard American English they (blacks) have no or poorly developed verbal abilities and skills, fail to realize the great importance that language plays in the daily lives of

black Americans and especially black ghetto dwellers. Roger Abrahams and Geneva Gay comment upon the role of language in the black community:

> Language in the largest sense plays a fundamental role in the process of survival in ghetto neighborhoods, in addition to being the basis of acquiring leadership, status, and success. The popularly held belief that it takes brute physical strength to survive in the ghetto is a myth. It may help one endure temporarily, but fists alone are not the answer to survival. Survival is based on one's versatility and adeptness in the use of words. The man-of-words is the one who becomes the hero to ghetto youth. Consider the current conditions and compile a profile of spokesmen of ghetto action groups. These persons in the spotlight are dynamic speakers whose jobs frequently depend on the effective use of words, such as lawyers and ministers. Verbal ability can make the difference between having or not having food to eat, a place to live, clothes to wear, being secure or risking a complete loss of ego. Therefore, for a member of street culture, language is not only a communicative device but also a mechanism of control and power.[3]

The major difference between Standard American English and Non-standard American English is the social status of the speaker using the two dialects. Black American English as a variety of Standard American English differs from Standard American English in some significant areas. When Black American English users do not use Standard American English, we say that they deviate from Standard American English and that such a deviation is a DIALECT INTERFERENCE and <u>not</u> an "error" in the use of Standard American English.

In America it has been assumed that Standard American English must be taught at all levels, in all schools, and to all students. It is believed in this country today that the Non-standard speaker must be taught a second dialect--Standard English--if that school

desires to prepare them for life in the so-called real world. It has also been assumed that Standard American English is superior to any of the Non-standard American English dialects. The idea that Standard American English which was early attached to the speech of a certain class and locale of the country is inherently superior to other dialects came about in the 16th and the 17th centuries, grew in the intellectual climate of the 18th century, further grew and was preserved in 19th century pedagogy.

Recent research on Standard and Non-standard American English dialects has revealed that the difference between the two are superficial. Present day linguists and other educators point out that all dialects are equally systematic and capable of serving the communication needs of the people who use them. No one dialect is better than another. Communication in the United States is not curtailed by the diversity of American English dialects. Such outstanding linguists as Roger Shuy, Raven and Virginia McDavid, William Labov, William Stewart, J.L. Dillard, Ralph W. Fasold, and Walt Wolfram have done extensive research on American dialects and have dispelled many of the non-sense notions, speculations and opinions held earlier about Non-standard American English dialects.

There are many problems that the English composition teacher faces as he attempts to get his students to mainly write and speak fluently the acceptable form of Standard American English since this is the language of the school and the language of the social climate of our mainstream and middle class culture. Yet, Black American English, as a Non-standard American English dialect, has great potential as an effective, rewarding, and workable instructional tool in the English composition classroom.

Thomas Kochman notes the "growth and development of speech ability" if students--especially black Americans--are permitted to use Black American English as a part of their learning activities:

> I envision such development to be in the form of vocabulary enrichment and sentence expansion, with vocabulary items embodying conceptualizing elements, and sentence expansions, which involve the learning of operations such as embedding and conjoining, developing cognitive processes: the perception and expression of relationships, etc. . . .[4]

William Labov exposes the conventional views about the cultural and verbal deprivation that follows those who use Black American English:

> The concept of verbal deprivation has no basis in social reality: in fact, Negro children in the urban ghettos receive a great deal of verbal stimulation, hear more well-formed sentences than middle-class children, and participate fully in a highly verbal culture; they have the same basic vocabulary, possess the same capacity for conceptual learning, and use the same logic as any one else who learns to speak and understand English.[5]

Robin Burling also comments upon the desirable and advantageous use of Black American English:

> To dismiss his speech as simply incorrect or inferior burdens the Negro who grows up in a northern ghetto with a nearly insuperable problem. To speak naturally with his parents and to compete with his contemporaries on the street, he simply must learn their variety of English. . . . The language he first learns is a rich and flexible medium in its own terms, and it can be used effectively in most situations he encounters in daily life.[6]

One can see, therefore, that great value can be derived by blacks and whites from the use of Black American English. A positive outcome can result when Black American English is used by blacks in the community for purposes of cultural identity, pride, and unity.

For instructional purposes, the use of the black American dialect can provide comfort and relaxation in language usage in educational activities and the classroom environment for blacks, and it can provide a medium to aid both blacks and whites to shift to Standard American English when the need arises. The use of Black American English by blacks in the English composition classroom will aid them in gaining an awareness of the legitimate use of the dialect for appropriate purposes and situations and for helping them to remove negative attitudes they have towards themselves because of their use of Black American English. The use of Black American English in the English composition classroom will help to expand black students' intellectual potential with more relaxation and without the disadvantage of fear and the inferiority labels that often follow them into the educational setting of the mainstream culture.

White students will be given a chance to view blacks and their dialect (BEA) with a more positive attitude and with more respect when they see the constructive and effective use that is made of Black American English in the English composition classroom, in the community, in mass media, in literature, etc., and when they are made aware of the linguistic and systematic equality of Black American English to other American dialects. Since Black American English <u>will not be automatically eradicated from use in America</u>, whites can also be given a chance to understand and to comprehend blacks who exclusively use and will continue to use Black American English, thus bringing about more harmony and better communication between the races.

In order for the students and the teacher (with no knowledge of these facts) to fully understand the value and the significance of Black American English as it may be used in the classroom, it is necessary for them to understand the historical background concerning both facts and beliefs about the origins and the development of Black American English as a linguistic system. Educators need to be aware and more conscious of these notions, and they need to consider the validity of them if they are to do adequate jobs in the classroom.

Black American English had a development that differed from that of other American social and regional dialects. It did not evolve as a result of geographic diffusing, but it came about as a result of the pidginization-creolization process that started with the slave trade in West Africa.

Just what variety of English was first used by the black Africans, who were transported to American soil, has for many years been a subject for speculation by many scholars and linguists. Some notions about Black American English have been purely speculations that were based upon no research and, hence, were quite impressionistic opinions. The more recent notions are backed up by some type of sound research. The bases for the notions center around the following influences that are said to have been the basic forces that brought about the birth and development of present-day Black American English: West African (language) influences, U.S. slave trade influences, U.S. Negro slavery, isolation of blacks in the United States (on plantations and later in ghettos), and Southern (U.S.) white influences. My aim here is to present the development of

Black American English (from the earliest days of the slave trade to U.S. colonial days and on to the present day) as it evolved from West African languages and was shaped by these influences. When appropriate, explanations and examples will be given to illustrate certain syntactic, morphological, and phonological features of present day Black American English that are derived from some influence or from some aspect of a particular developmental stage.

Early views concerning the brand of English used by black Africans during the 17th and the 18th centuries in America are very different from more recent notions. Such writers as A.E. Gonzales, George Krapp, Reed Smith, John Bennett, and Mason Crum saw the brand of black dialect called Gullah or other representative types of black American speech as forms that were ill formed and badly used versions of English, and they have, hence, produced stigmatizing and negative attitudes towards the black American dialect. Most of these writers assumed that all of the features of this black dialect of English had evolved from 17th and 18th century British dialects spoken by overseers and masters to communicate with slaves and it is evident that at least some of the features of the black dialect did come from that source. It is also evident, however, that these early writers did not consider possible African influences upon the language used by black Africans in America. Some recent researchers, investigators, and linguists have dispelled some of the early notions about the non-African influences upon Gullah and a black creole in their rejection of theories claiming exclusively British origins of black English.

Lorenzo Dow Turner (who gives some evidences of the creole theory of black English) has done much in this area of his study, Africanisms in the Gullah Dialect, as have William Stewart and Raven and Virginia McDavid in a number of articles.

When the first black people were brought to America from the West Coast of Africa, they were speaking the various languages of that region. As the institution of U.S. Negro slavery began to take hold in America in the late 17th and the early 18th centuries, many blacks started to take their speech forms from both their American and their British masters. Hence, some of the black pronunciation features have roots in the speech of cultured Virginians of the colonial period and also in the pre-Revolution British dialects.

The great majority of black slaves were brought directly from Africa in the years before and for a long time after the Revolutionary War. Some slaves were also brought from the West Indies. In 1808 Congress prohibited the importation of slaves, but slaves were still brought in and the contraband traffic continued until the days of the Civil War. Slaves were taken from places where slave ships could frequent--namely on the West African coast from the Senegal region to the southern lines of Portuguese West Africa.

It is evident historically that the African slaves in America were not able to continue to use their native languages. M.M. Mathews gives his interpretation of black Africans' first attempts at an acquisition of English:

> . . . . They (black Africans) were landed at such places as New Orleans, Savannah, and Charleston, and from such centers they were sold in all directions. The chances for those coming from the same dialect area in sufficient numbers to make it possible or

> desirable for them to make any use of their ancestal speech were very slight indeed. The only course for them was to learn as quickly as possible the language of those whom they served.[7]

It should be noted here that the masters of these black slaves were interested in getting work done and not in teaching blacks how to speak English. There seems here to be clear basis for much of Lorenzo Turner's belief that Gullah (and, hence, my contention that Black American English today) possibly could reveal some aspects of those West African dialects that the black Africans must have retained as they sought to use English as it was spoken in the 17th century.

There seems to be much evidence that Gullah or Geechee which must have had some influence upon the origin and the development of present day Black American English was influenced by the West African languages. The black dialect (Gullah) was spoken by ex-slaves and their descendants who lived in areas extending from Georgetown, South Carolina, to the northern boundary of Florida and could be heard on the mainland and on the Sea Islands in the surrounding region.

By 1858 a number of recently arrived slaves were brought to South Carolina and Georgia. They were from a section along the West Coast of Africa which extended from Senegal to Angola. Turner, in his study, Africanisms in the Gullah Dialect, lists the areas from which these black Africans came as Senegal, Gambia, Sierra Leone, Liberia, the Gold Coast, Togo, Dahomey, Nigeria, and Angola; and he lists the West African languages which have some similarity to Gullah as Wolof, Malinke, Mandinka, Bambara, Fula, Mende, Vai, Twi, Fante, Ga, Ewe, Fon, Yoruba, Bini, Hausa, Ibo, Ibibio, Efik, Kongo, Umbundu, and Kimbundu.

Some scholars believe that Gullah has many features of some British dialects of the 17th and 18th centuries; they have, therefore, assumed that Gullah is partly a survival of a simplified "foreigner talk" which the white people, during the early period of slavery, used in communicating with the black African slaves.

A.E. Gonzales, a newspaperman in Charleston, in 1922 made the following remarks about Gullah and its users:

> Slovenly and careless of speech, these Gullahs seized upon the peasant English used by some of the early settlers and by the white servants of the wealthier colonists, wrapped their clumsy tongues about it as well as they could, and, enriched with certain expressive African words, it issued through their flat noses and thick lips as so workable a form of speech that it was gradually adopted by the other slaves and became in time the accepted Negro speech of the lower districts of South Carolina and Georgia . . . .[8]

Gonzales continues by saying that "they (blacks) seem to have picked not a single jungle-word for the enrichment of their own speech."[9]

Other early scholars such as Dr. Reed Smith of the University of South Carolina in 1926 saw Gullah as a dialect which blacks had composed from "a sizeable part of the English vocabulary as spoken on the coast by the white inhabitants from about 1700 . . . and . . . changed in tonality, pronunciation, cadence, and grammar to suit their native phonetic tendencies, and their existing needs of expression and communication."[10]

A similar type contention about the Gullah dialect was made in 1930 by Dr. Guy B. Johnson of the University of North Carolina:

> But this strange dialect turns out to be little more than the peasant English of two centuries ago. From Midland and Southern England came planters, artisans, shopkeepers, indentured servants, all of whom had more or less contact with the slaves and the speech of these poorer white folk was so rustic that their more cultured countrymen had difficulty in understanding them. From this peasant speech and from the 'baby talk' used by masters in addressing them, the Negroes developed that dialect, sometimes known as Gullah, which remains the characteristic feature of the culture of the Negroes of South Carolina and Georgia. . . .[11]

Those above mentioned writers saw few African influences upon the Gullah dialect. A Columbia University professor, George Philip Krapp, in 1924 contended that the white master during the days of slavery used, "a very much simplified English--the kind of English some people employ when they talk to babies" to communicate with black slaves.[12] This language, he asserted, had no verb tense, no distinctions between cases of nouns and pronouns, and no kinds of markers for singular and plural, with "difficult sounds eliminated, as they are in baby-talk," and with its "vocabulary. . . reduced to the lowest possible elements."[13] An infantile English as Krapp believed was developed as these blacks sought to communicate with one another. Professor Krapp further gave the opinion that "very little of the dialect . . . perhaps none of it, is derived from sources other than English. In vocabualry, in syntax, and pronunciation, practically all of the forms of Gullah can be explained

on the basis of English. . . ."[14] John Bennett also pictures great white influences upon the Gullah dialect and he considered it as "speech . . . conspicuous for its short cuts. Its grammar, which is but an abbreviated and mutilated English grammar, knows no rule except to follow the line of least resistance, violate all rules of logic, and say just that which is natural and to the point."[15]

The above mentioned interpreters of the sources of Gullah show their lack of knowledge about the linguistic background of Africans who were brought to America. Lorenzo Dow Turner, who knew something about African languages, however, did see and fulfilled the need to study those African influences upon Gullah--influences that in many cases are present in present day Black American English. In an attempt to remove much of the mystery and the confusion about the Gullah dialect and in an attempt to disprove some earlier beliefs and notions held about Gullah, Turner studied the language used by blacks in the coastal South Carolina region--Waccamaw, James, Johns, Wadmalaw, Edisto, St. Helena, and Hilton Head Islands; those in the Georgia region were Darien, Harris Neck, Sapeloe Island, St. Simon Island, and St. Marys. The following tribes were the original west African ancestors of the blacks in the areas just mentioned: the Twi, the Dahomeans, the Mandingo, the Yoruba, the Ibo, the northern tribes of Nigeria, and the Ovimbundu.

William A. Stewart is among the linguists and scholars who believe that a black American dialect got started as a form of pidginized English and that it was used in the British colonies

where it was passed down from one generation to the next as a creole language. Stewart asserts that "at least some of the particular syntactic features of American Negro dialects are neither skewings nor extensions of white dialect patterns, but are in fact structural vestiges of an earlier plantation creole, and ultimately of the original slave-trade English which gave rise to it."[16] The reason why this pidginized English has been found to have been in widespread use in the New World might be because it did not originate in America as an isolated and accidental language form; it had it origin in the West African coastal slave factories and in the trade centers of the area.

To Stewart, therefore, it seems possible that some Africans had a knowledge of the pidgin English when they were brought to American soil. Stewart further explains his notions about the development of West African pidginized English and a creole language that blacks used:

> Another change which took place in the New World population primarily during the course of the eighteenth century was the social cleavage of the New World-born generations into underprivileged field hands (a continuation of the older, almost universal lot of the Negro slave) and privileged domestic servant. The difference in privilege usually meant, not freedom instead of bondage, but rather freedom from degrading kinds of labor, access to the 'big house' with its comforts and 'civilization', and proximity to the prestigious 'quality' whites, with the opportunity to imitate their behavior (including their speech) and to wear their clothes. In some cases, privilege included the chance to get an education and, in a very few, access to wealth and freedom. In both the British colonies and the United States, Negroes belonging to the privileged group were soon able to acquire a more standard variety of English than the creole of the field hands, and those who managed to get a decent education became speakers of fully standard and often elegant English. This seems to have become the usual situation by the early 1800s, and remained so through the Civil war.[17]

Hence, he believes that the uneducated field hands and often the users of Gullah perpetuated the use of creole English from colonial times down to the days of the Civil War. This creole English did after the Civil War lose some of the distinctive creole features and was eventually influenced by the written English language and some local white (mainly Southern) dialects.

In many ways the dialect used by blacks in America is quite similar to that which many Southern (U.S.) whites use. Hans Kurath strongly supports this statement in his remarks about the white influences upon Black American English:

> By and large the Southern Negro speaks the language of the white man of his locality or area and of his education. . . . the speech of the uneducated Negroes . . . differs little from that of the illiterate white; that is, it exhibits the same regional and local variations as that of the simple white folk.[18]

Lewis and Marguerite Herman, however, do not find such outstanding white influences upon a black American dialect, for they believe that "instead of being completely influenced by white Colonial speech (which in turn was influenced by Scottish, Irish, and British), the Negro may have contributed much to the white Southern speech and may be responsible for many Southern dialect variants."[19]

It is evident that neither Gonzales nor Reed Smith were trained in the history of the English language and that their view are colored by patronizing views of black people. Hans Kurath, George Philip Krapp and Raven I. McDavid did have such training in English but were unaware of the African languages that Lorenzo Dow Turner knew. Statements by Kurath, McDavid and Turner seem to be more reliable and, hence, more believable. I do not put much faith in the statements by Smith, Krapp, and Gonzales.

In order to show how the West African languages did in many ways (though not in all ways) influence the development of a Gullah dialect which also may be said to have had some influences upon present day Black American English, the following similarities in syntax, morphology, and phonology between the three (West African languages, Gullah, Black American English) are presented. Examples and/or explanations (which are observations that the writer of this paper is making about the present day black American dialect) are taken from present day Black American English and will serve as the bases for illustrating the similarities between the language forms. Turner's descriptions (found in his Africanisms in the Gullah Dialect) will serve as explanations for this analysis of the features or characteristics common to all three language forms that contain some African features.

Syntax

Some of the most striking similarities in syntactic features between Gullah and the West African languages (and hence Black American English of today) can be found in the use of the verb "to be" and in word order (among other things).

1. dɔ ("to be" as a verb of incomplete predication).

   The verb dɔ is used in a present, past or even future sense, dependent upon the context in the Gullah dialect. It can also be used in a similar manner in many West African languages.

   EXAMPLES I be tired after I work at night.
   She be here all day.
   Cindy always be around here.
   They be at school regularly.

2. Word Order. Many characteristics that are not found in the English sentence are found in sentences of Gullah and those of the West African languages. Very often, failures to use articles and in certain constructions prepositions, pronouns, or other parts of speech that would be required in English, contribute to the unusual nature of the word order of their sentences.

EXAMPLES He workin'.

My name Joe.

**absence of the form of the verb "to be"

In both questions and statements the Gullah speaker omits the auxiliary do, and in interrogative sentences he usually places the subject before the verb as he does in declarative sentences. The question in many instances can be distinguished from the statement by intonation. In many West African languages the word order of interrogative sentences is very often just like that of statements.

EXAMPLES Where he been? (has deleted)

She going with you? (is deleted)

Y' understand'? (do deleted)

The practice in Gullah of opening a sentence with its subject or object and of repeating this subject or object by the use of a personal pronoun is quite common. Also this type word order may be found in several West African languages.

EXAMPLES My sister, she is a nurse.

That ball player, he swingin', cool an' wil'.

Morphology

Some similarities in form between the nouns, pronouns, and verbs of Gullah and those of the West African languages and Black American English may be considered under such categories as number, tense, and case.

1. Number of Nouns. Most Gullah nouns have the same forms in both the singular and in the plural. They use a qualifying demonstrative pronoun or a numeral adjective. This practice is common in many West African languages.

   EXAMPLES I got five sister.

   Dat kid done foun' eight dollar an' five cent.

2. Number of Verbs. No distinction is made in form between the singular and the plural of the Gullah verb which is also the case in many West African languages.

EXAMPLES	I do	I run
	you do	you run
	he, she, it do	he, she, it run
	we do	we run
	you do	you run
	they do	they run

***absence of the 3rd person singular marker -s or -es

3. Case of Nouns. Nouns in Gullah have the same form in all cases which are uninflected. In names of relationship in Ewe, the genitive is similarly uninflected. Only its position in the sentence can show the case of a noun in Ibo. The position of a noun is the indicator of the possessive singular of the noun in Ga.

EXAMPLES Bill car is down the street.

They be studyin' at Rita house.

***absence of the ('s) or the possessive case marker

A Few Word Formations

The Gullah and the West African language speakers use many methods of forming words that are so frequently used in English.

1. The Use of Groups of Words for Parts of Speech. Rather than use a single verb to express the action, frequently the Gullah user will employ a group of words to describe the nature of an action. In the West African languages, numerous examples of the use of a group of words or a sentence which is equivalent in English to a noun, verb, adjective, adverb or some other part of speech may be found.

EXAMPLES She didn' do nothin'.

They might can come.

He might would play in the game if he ain' sick.

Pete useta would fight his playmates.

2. Reduplicated Forms. In Gullah many reduplicated forms are used to intensify the meanings of words, as is the case with many West African languages which employ reduplicated forms for a great variety of usages.

EXAMPLES Where y'' been at.

I done bought two pencil and plus three book.

They don' have no money.

All done did that but excep' y' an' me.

3. Onomatopoetic Expressions. Gullah and the West African languages are rich in onomatopoetic expressions.

EXAMPLES ***Refer to Clarence Major's Dictionary of of Afro-American Slang

Sounds

Turner makes the following revealing statements about sounds, Gullah and the West African languages--statements one should consider as he analyzes Black American English today:

> The sounds of Gullah show many striking resemblances to those of several West African languages. When the African came to the United States and encountered in English sounds not present in his native language, he did what any other person to whom English was a foreign language would have done under similar circumstances--he substituted sounds from his own language which appeared to him to resemble most closely those English sounds which were unfamiliar to him.[28]

Gullahs are inclined when pronouncing English words or syllables that end in a consonant either to add or to drop the consonant. The tendency to avoid certain consonant combinations either by inserting a vowel between the consonant or more frequently by dropping one of them is evident. In some West African languages every syllable ends in a vowel--the many consonant clusters at the ends of words avoided.

EXAMPLES deletion of -d, -ed, final -t and -d, -sk, -st as in---tes'; des'; buil'; col'; foun'

Intonation

The following is Turner's findings about intonation in Guallah and in the West African languages:

> Probably no characteristic of the Gullah Negro's speech appears so strange to one who hears this dialect for the first time as its intonation. To understand fully the intonation of Gullah one will have to turn to those west African tone languages spoken by the slaves who were being brought to South Carolina and Georgia continually until practically the beginning of the Civil War. Among these tone languages are Mende, Vai, Twi, Fante, Ga, Ewe, Yoruba, Ibo, Bini, Efif, and a few others. . . . . The tones of Gullah words do not distinguish meanings as do tones in African tone languages. There are in Gullah, however, several intonation patterns used in sentences, phrases, and words, that are quite common in the African languages but are used in cultivated English under similar conditions.[21]

Studies centered around African languages (although these languages do have some features common to many other languages) have helped linguists and educators see that the black dialect is not the language of a group of ignorant savages. Instead, from these studies these scholars might possibly see some relationships between the black dialect and the West African languages (i.e., an affiliation with African heritage and background). The relationships between black and white speech may be seen in a study of creolized and pidginized languages.

Raven and Virginia McDavid immediately recognized that the real impact of Turner's study would lead to the rejection of many negative notions about the black American dialect:

> . . . Africanisms in the Gullah Dialect, dispels effectively the notions that the American Negro lost all his language and his culture under the impact of chattel slavery and the plantation.

> Turner's overt statement is impressive enough: that an investigation of Gullah speech discloses several thousand items presumably derived from the language of the parts of Africa from which the slaves were taken. But the implicit conclusions are yet more impressive: that many structural features of Gullah are also to be found in creolized languages of South America and the Caribbean, in the pidgin-like trade English of West Africa, and in many African languages--this preservation of fundamental structural traits is a more cogent argument for the importance of the African element in the Gullah dialect (and, by inference, in the totality of Gullah culture) than any number of details of vocabulary. . . . Turner's work has already made scholars aware of the importance of the African background in American Negro speech. . . .[22]

Scholars who study Black American English in the future should take into account the dispelling of deceptive and misleading as well as slanted information and negative notions as they attempt to "indicate that there is no speech form identifiable as of Negro origin solely on the basis of Negro physical characteristics" and as they attempt to "show that it is probable that some speech forms of Negroes--and even of some whites--may be derived from an African cultural background by the normal processes of cultural transmission."[23] As present day linguists present carefully researched information about Black American English, they might also produce positive notions which might have a great effect upon teachers and school administrators. Positive notions about the origins and development of Black American English could be instrumental in changing negative attitudes that many educators and students have about the usefulness (in the classroom and in the community) and the effectiveness of Black American English and about its users.

In spite of the revelations made by all of the carefully researched information and studies that show the legitimate communicative and effective use of all American English dialects in appropriate situations, many teachers believe that the use of Non-standard American English dialects and/or Black American English in the classroom only re-enforces "wrong or bad English." Black American English and other Non-standard American English dialects are not "wrong or bad English." These Non-standard American English dialects may and should be used in appropriate situations and settings; hence, the type of person and the nature of the place and situation or environment will determine the appropriateness of the use of a particular dialect.

Before the English composition teacher begins to use the BLACK AMERICAN ENGLISH CODE-SWITCHING TECHNIQUE which is first presented here, he must establish a tone for its use in the classroom environment. He must conduct brief discussions of the history of the English language and Standard English; and the origins and the development of American English, Standard American English, Black American English and the other Non-standard American English dialects. He must also show the students that Black American English is a legitimate communication device, that it should and can be effectively used in appropriate environments, and that Standard American English should be learned for proper shifting and communicating (orally and in writing) when the need (mainly economical, social, occupational, educational) arises in our complex American society.

Before the teacher can get Non-standard American English or Black American English users to learn Standard American English, he must get them to see the need for it, and he must motivate them to practice using Standard American English through interesting, appropriate and not boring lessons. The teaching process must be a developmental. sequential and daily one which establishes new concepts and ideas about language, reading and vocabulary as well as about written and oral composition skills rather than through the repetition of a long list of disconnected drills and exercises.

There are many known techniques that have been used to get Non-standard American English and Black American English users to use Standard American English. Most of these techniques have embraced the use of methods applied to the learning of a foreign language or the learning of a second dialect. These methods include the comparing and contrasting of the two language systems. These drills and/or exercises show the students Non-standard and Standard English for the same feature to be learned to help the students distinguish between the dialects or language systems. Irwin Feigenbaum has developed interesting oral Discrimination, Identification, Translation, and Response drills which may be used for brief periods of time on a regular basis in the class, causing and requiring the students to use natural Standard American English. He believes that Non-standard English can be useful in teaching Standard American English when the teacher stresses only real problem areas.[24] Ruth I. Golden's Improving Patterns of Language Usage also uses pattern practice drills in attempting to help students to shift from one language system to the other.[25] San Su C. Lin's Pattern Practice is another work that attempts to get black English users to use Standard English in appropriate and natural situations.[26]

The BLACK AMERICAN ENGLISH CODE-SWITCHING TECHNIQUE first presented and advocated here for use in the English composition classroom exclusively and freely uses Black American English (often ridiculed and stigmatized), and it also uses the aural-oral method or linguistic method and a writing teaching method. This is a teaching technique designed not to teach the students anything new, but to help them to easily and naturally shift from one linguistic system to another. Hence, the use of Black American English in the classroom as a legitimate linguistic system can help students to speak and to write Standard American English when the need arises and can help them to change negative attitudes towards Non-standard dialect users and their dialects.

White and black students in the oral and written English composition class can be first diagnosed by the teacher at the beginning of the term or semester and continuously examined (through their written and oral assignments) to determine what dialect interferences or features or so-called "errors" are found in assignments of these students. The teacher (both black and white) who uses Black American English as a teaching tool must first familiarize himself with the basic features of the Non-standard American dialect. Ralph W. Fasold and Walter A. Wolfram, in my opinion, have produced the best description of Black American English--grammatically and phonologically--for the average teacher who does or does not have the advantage of outstanding training in the areas of linguistics and dialectology. This reference is made to their "Some Linguistic Features of Negro

Dialect."[27] The teacher does not have to be fluent in speaking Black American English, but he should be aware of and able to recognize dialect interferences with Standard American English. He must determine whether the dialect interferences used by the students are features of Black American English. He should then properly in individual and separate lessons present the comparing and/or contrasting between the Standard American English and the Black American English feature or dialect interference the students may be using.

There are a few basic factors that the teacher himself for his own benefit must establish about the dialect interferences or features which make these particular dialect interferences outstanding enough for any extended coverage in lessons for this type of code-switching teaching. Some of the dialect features are regional in nature and carry no stigma; whereas, others carry a definite social stigma and may be damaging to the users economically and socially in certain situations in America. These features set aside social groups from others. The teacher should emphasize features that may be considered stereotypical in nature.

The teacher's selection of features or dialect interferences for code-switching teaching is necessary. He should select the smallest possible number of features to be learned and stressed, and he should teach these well and adequately. The features selected for study in the class should be those that follow general rules that govern Non-standard dialect usage. The dialect interferences or features that are selected for emphasis in the BLACK AMERICAN ENGLISH

CODE-SWITCHING TECHNIQUE should be the grammatical features before the phonological features. Sometimes these features intertwine to produce certain stigmatizing features. General dialect features should also be determined and stressed before regional features. Classroom emphasis upon dialect interferences should be determined by the frequency of the features as they are found in the students' assignments.

Teaching code-switching with the Black American English dialect "rules" as opposed to the traditional Standard American English rules (usually found in most traditional grammar books) makes students aware of the dialectal usage that affects them daily, and it gives them a basis for their dialect shifting in a way that is not done traditionally. The BLACK AMERICAN ENGLISH CODE-SWITCHING TECHNIQUE proposed here requires a basic consideration of the information presented above. It also requires the establishemnt of "rules" (based upon Fasold and Wolfram's description) or dialect interferences or features into a set of "general rules" that compare and/or contrast Black American English with Standard American English usage.

These General Caetgories of "rules" my fall under the basic characteristics of many Non-standard dialects. These characteristics are Substitution, Simplification, Redundancy or Repetition or Addition, and/Reduction or Deletion or Omission in certain linguistic environments. The students are given the meaning of each of these General Categories and are shown how these apply to the "rules" or features or dialect interferences they have used in their oral and written compositions. This will hopefully help them to remember the

areas or categories under which their dialect interferences fall, and, hence, will help them to switch of shift when the need arises. As a dialect interference is discovered in an assignment, for example, in the case of the absence of -s in 3rd person singular present tense verbs in Black American English, the students are told that the "rule" falls under the category of Deletion or Reduction or Omission; the same category could phonologically apply to the deletion of -d, -ed, -t, -st, or -sk at the ends of certain words in Black American English. Oral repetition-manipulation pattern practices and written fluency dialogues, drills and exercises that sound natural when used in sentences that have interest and meaning for the listener and the students may be effective to aid in the shift from one dialect to the other. The drills, dialogues, exercises, and even composition revisions must also use sentences that improve vocabualry, punctuation and spelling. These types of sentences may also contain important information about the students' career choices and goals and/or similar type constructive and meaningful enrichment type sentences (i.e., literature, history, current events, avocations). Frequent reminders about the General Category of the dialect interference or "rule" as it appears in the students' work will re-enforce its use in the students' oral and written compositions.

The English composition teacher should also be aware of and use much information and many researched facts about the effectiveness of the use of Non-standard English and Black American English, other learning and teaching activities, strategies, approaches, and methods. His use of such materials might hopefully solve some of the many

problems he faces daily in his composition classes. As he attempts to improve the English compositions of his students, he must remain open-minded and ever willing to try teaching strategies he has never tried before in his classes to help his students communicate better and more fluently. First, the teacher must put into practice some innovative concepts in his teaching of English composition. He needs to learn as much as possible about the various dialects his students use. He also needs to be aware of the similarity between Standard colloquial oral English and Non-standard English dialects--especially Black American English.

Changing his negative attitudes (if he has any) towards his students' linguistic and cultural backgrounds and helping his students to do the same are main goals for each English composition teacher. More attention needs to be given to fluency than to correctness in the evaluation of language assignments (oral and written). The teacher should be aware of the ideas that "right" means speech that is appropriate to a situation and "wrong" means speech that is likely to put the students (or speakers) to a disadvantage. Emphasis should be placed upon the fact that the use of Non-standard dialects can harm individuals at sometime, but the speakers should be encouraged to retain their native dialects and to use them when they are in home and community situations, only shifting dialects when necessary.

In addition, the teacher who is interested in improving instruction in oral and written English composition may also use the following teaching strategies, activities, methods, aids, and approaches that

freely use and apply features of and information about Black American English, other Non-standard American dialects, and Standard American English; and that show the close relationship between the diverse cultural, social and ethnical backgrounds and language usage in America:

1. After appropriate diagnosis and examination of students' compositions (oral and written), use the BLACK AMERICAN ENGLISH CODE-SWITCHING TECHNIQUE (oral and written) drills, exercises, dialogues, and conversations in the English composition classroom when it is necessary for shifting from Non-standard to Standard English.
2. Discuss the history and the development of the English language.
3. Discuss the history and the development of Standard English.
4. Discuss the history and the development of American English.
5. Discuss the history and the development of Standard American English.
6. Discuss the origins and the development of Black American English and other relevant social and regional Non-standard American dialects.
7. Examine various dictionaries--the Dictionary of American English, the Dictionary of Americanisms, the Dictionary of Afro-American Slang, and the Oxford English Dictionary.
8. Discuss the lexical richness (borrowings) in American English and Americanisms.

9. Play representations of different American English (Standard and Non-standard) dialects.
10. Discuss how language operates in the communication process.
11. Discuss the concept of language change.
12. Discuss the concept of dialect appropriateness.
13. Discuss the major dialect areas of the United States.
14. Discuss the causes and/or effects of cultural diversity and language/dialect usage in the United States.
15. Discuss the use of the dialect atlas and the various dialect atlases of the United States.
16. Discuss the types of American English.
17. Discuss the styles of American English.
18. Have students classify and use various black American verbal strategies through the presentation of oral and/or written examples (i.e., jiving, running it down, copping a plea, rapping, shucking, signifying, and sounding).
19. Make the students aware of the black American folk literary tradition (i.e., black folk tales, blues, spirituals, ballads, jokes, and secular songs by anonymous and known black American) writers) and its effective use of Black American English.
21. Show the students some examples of the use of Black American English in the mass media (e.g., movies and television).
21. Discuss the non-effect of the diversity of American dialects upon basic communication in the United States.
22. Have students write and present orally skits for role playing in Black American English and Standard American English and practice the use of each dialect in appropriate situations.

23. Use black American folk literary tradition materials (written or spoken) which make use of Black American English for the BLACK AMERICAN ENGLISH CODE-SWITCHING TECHNIQUE drills, exercises,etc.
24. Play word games.
25. Conduct verbal contests.
26. Present and drill contrasting minimal pairs of words (in Black American English to Standard American English) to shift to Standard American English spelling and pronunciation.
27. Discuss dialect interferences found primarily in written compositions as opposed to those dialect interferences found mainly in oral compositions.
28. Discuss the similarity between Standard colloquial oral English and Non-standard American dialects, especially Black American English.
29. Use group methods with interchange between Non-standard English speakers and Standard English speaker.
30. Provide many opportunities for students to use their own native dialects in classroom situations.
31. Discuss the concept of regional, cultural and social (home, peer group) language and usage.
32. Discuss the idea of respect and tolerance for language and dialect divergences.

33. Have students write and/or speak Non-standard dialect themes (fiction or non-fiction) based upon folk American literature with emphasis upon Black American English dialect usage.
34. Discuss students' occupational goals and other needs for the use of Standard English in American society.
35. Read and discuss the use of various Non-standard dialects in folk American literature.

It is hopeful that the English composition teacher who uses and applies the above mentioned information in his classroom will get better and more fluent oral and written compositions from his students and will also develop positive attitudes in them in regards to the effective use of certain Standard and Non-standard American dialects for appropriate situations and environments (cultural, social, educational, occupational).

FOOTNOTES

1 William Labov, "The Logic of Non-standard English," Florida FL Reporter (Spring-Summer 1969): 66-74.

2 Roger Abrahams, "Black Talk and Black Education," in Linguistics-Cultural Differences and American Education, Special Anthology Issue, Florida FL Reporter, eds., A.C. Aarons, Babara Y. Gordon, and William A. Stewart (1969): 10ff.

3 Roger Abrahams and Geneva Gay, "Talking Black in the Classroom," in Language and Cultural Diversity in American Education, eds. Roger Abrahams and Rudolph C. Troike (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1972), p. 201.

4 Thomas Kochman,"Culture and Communication: Implication for Black English in the Classroom," Florida FL Reporter (Spring-Summer 1969): 92.

5 Labov, p. 60.

6 Robbins Burling, Man's Many Voices (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1970), pp. 122-123.

7 M.M. Mathews, Some Sources of Southernisms (Birmingham: University of Alabama Press, 1948), p. 90.

8 Ambrose E. Gonzales, The Black Border (Columbia, S.C.: The State Company, 1922), pp. 10, 17-18.

9 Ibid., pp. 17-18.

10 Reed Smith, Gullah (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina, 1926), p. 22.

11 Guy B. Johnson, "St. Helena Songs and Stories," in T.J. Woofter, Jr., Black Yeomanry (1930), pp. 49, 53.

[12] George P. Krapp, "The English of the Negro," American Mercury, June 1924, pp. 192-193.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Ibid.

[15] Mason Crum, Gullah: Negro Life in the Carolina Sea Islands (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1940), pp. 111, 121, 123.

[16] William A. Stewart, "Continuity and Change in American Negro Dialects," Florida FL Reporter (Spring 1967): 465.

[17] William A. Stewart, "Sociolinguistic Factors in the History of American Negro Dialects," Florida FL Reporter (Spring 1967): 451.

[18] Hans Kurath, A World Geography of the Eastern United States (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1949), p. 6.

[19] Lewis Herman and Marguerita Herman, American Dialects (New York: Theatre Arts Books, 1947), pp. 189-190.

[20] Lorenzo Dow Turner, Africanisms in the Gullah Dialect (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949), p. 240.

[21] Ibid., p. 249

[22] Raven I.McDavid, Jr. and Virginia Glenn McDavid, "The Relationship of the Speech of American Negroes to the Speech of Whites," American Speech 26 (February 1951): 3-17.

[23] Ibid., p. 3.

[24] Irwin Feigenbaum, "The Use of Nonstandard English in Teaching Standard: Contrast and Comparison," in Teaching Standard English in the Inner City, eds. Ralph W. Fasold and Roger W. Shuy (Washington, D.C.: Center for Applied Linguistics, 1970), pp. 87-104.

25 Ruth I. Golden, Improving Patterns Of Language Usage (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1960).

26 San Su C. Lin, Pattern ~~Pattern~~ Practice (New York: Bureau of Publications---Columbia University, 1965).

27 Ralph W. Fasold and Walt Wolfram, "Some Linguistic Features of Negro Dialect," in Teaching Standard English in the Inner City, eds. Ralph W. Fasold and Roger W. Shuy (Washington, D.C.: Center for Applied Linguistics, 1970), pp. 41-86.

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